XXI

Funerary honors for warriors who die in battle

766 When a Mundurucu happens to die in the course of one of their frequent wars, his comrades cut off his head and mummify it in the accustomed manner.

Upon their return to the village, they put it in a special place along with the weapons, horn and ornaments which belonged to the dead warrior.

This relic becomes the object of public veneration.

765 If a Mundurucu from a neighboring tribe happens to come by, he goes to see it and pays it the proper respects, weeping and lamenting its fate. In the native village, public honors are paid to the late warrior; the time is settled in advance and invitations are made to neighboring villages.

When the time comes the people get together; the head is laid in a sort of basket or hamper, which is placed across the laps of the widow, mother and sisters of the dead man.

The other women sit around them in a circle. Several torches of resinous wood blaze near the funerary basket.

The warriors, bedecked with ornaments and armed with bows and arrows, dance around the group, blowing their horns and playing other musical instruments.

Other groups of men do likewise inside the ekçam while some dance and sing around the house where the head receiving these funerary honors is located. All the while they pronounce in loud voices the following lament:

"Thou hast died, my kinsman, we shall avenge thee; this is the [131] purpose for which we are on this earth, each to avenge the other who dies in battle. Our foes are no braver and no more manly than we."

In Mundurucu it runs as follows:

[539] "Ftean ari ubaripeinhaçan eted ei ue-gne ari utiede aipanme idie ôpe te atedeiame rupanhô be tean anhem parui áte bé. Uterupanhon ibeixi ame utie de utedie ute beixi."

These funerary celebrations last for longer than one day.

765 They are held once a year for the first four years following the warrior's death.

On the fourth year, the celebration ends with the burial of the head; on this occasion, the women as well as the men address it with the following words:

765 539 "My brother (or my son), we have come here to bury thee. Thou hast died; to this end wert thou born. Thou hast died in war, because thou wert brave; to this end did our mothers and fathers nurture us. We must not fear our foe. Whosoever dies in war dies with honor; it is not as death from illness. We have come from all the malocas to weep and dance to the end of thy burial."

The Mundurucu version runs as follows:

"Uanhum inhaçan uté sõte écũ tchãme. Iménhame ari utiẽ bai utiẽ mai pánme. Eteã nanhum utẽ rupanhum bẽ anhocate ediẽ. Imenhame utiẽ xi utiẽ me pito utiẽ bai ari uẽ utiẽ ũebé anhocate epeçupeidié ipi bé utiẽ parará ama utiẽ rupanhum bẽ-xime. Rupãnhum-bẽ tié à ãen anhocate ediẽ tutu uẽ-ẽ utié rupanhum bẽ-ibé pame une pite idiotié má utié pa-ãme pai bẽxime cauxi pibõne. Idiõtié utiésote anhuncaxiri bẽũi caracuie cuié ãẽ uadime uté cabé ute racui axirau umãe iueipe iũé utiẽ uẽné pam utié sote nhaçam achi-tutũne pré ibiman utié diepite diei." [132]

At the same time, around the funerary basket, the women speak as from the dead man's mouth:

"My mother (or my wife), thou wilt die in bed of illness. I died in war because I was brave."

534 784 In the course of these ceremonies the shamans blow on a special instrument: it is a kind of horn which they call caruquê.

[349] To this end the shaman hides in a small hut which is especially built for the purpose, and where the women are strictly forbidden to enter.

On the other hand, these superstitious women avoid the sight of that sacred and mysterious instrument in every possible way. They are convinced that were they to glance at the caruquê but for an instant, they would commit a sacrilege that would cause them misfortune for the rest of their lives.

765 Finally, a vertical grave is dug inside the dwelling of the warrior's family, and the head in whose honor the ceremonies took place is buried there.

XXII

Hunting, fishing, and agricultural celebrations

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224 Each Mundurucu village also carries out every year at the start of winter a public ceremony which celebrates hunting and fishing on alternate years.

To this end the village elects a ceremonial leader who is chosen among the most reputed warriors and who must also be a good singer. [13]

They accumulate beforehand ample quantities of game, beiju (a kind of manioc bread), sweet potatoes, and other foodstuffs.

The women paint themselves with genipap, urucu, and other highly effective colors.

Men and women, adorned with feather ornaments and necklaces of enemy teeth, assemble in groups wherever they please and begin to make music, to dance and to sing.

They gather the skulls of tapir, deer, and other species of game or fish, and offer them the best delicacies -- dau, taruba, maniqueira, and other foods.

At midnight the shaman retires to a special room, beyond the reach of unhallowed glances. There, in the midst of absolute darkness, he first calls in loud voices upon the tapir's "mother," if the ceremony is in celebration of hunting.

After a while, those who surround the mysterious hut hear within it the sharp scream of the tapir.

[325] It is the shaman imitating the cry of this animal to notify his audience that the spirit has answered his call and has come down to the hut.

There ensues a lively debate in loud voices between the tapir's "mother" and the shaman. He requests her to favor the

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727 ahead to the men's house and displayed the prizes to the older men and told them who had taken each. The warriors and their accompanying women then entered the village, and each delivered his captive children to the care of his wife and went to the men's house, where the trophy heads were returned to their owners.

727 765 [616] Although the waiting members of the community showed joy at the return of the war party, especially if it had been successful, mourning was in order for those who had fallen in the fray. Among the Mundurucú, each clan recognizes certain other clans of the opposite moiety as their *iboiwatitit*, or people who have the responsibility of burying the dead of the clan. This function is looked upon as more than a duty; moieties are conceived as ritually hostile bodies, and the iboiwatitit consider it a pleasure to bury the dead of the complementary clan. When the whole body is not available, it is considered necessary to the maintenance of proper relations between moieties that some part of the dead be buried. Since it was not expedient to bring the dead back to Mundurucú territory for interment, it was customary for a member of a slain warrior's iboiwatitit to sever his humerus and return it for the mortuary rites. This practice was said to have been followed also in the cases of men who were too severely wounded to continue the homeward journey; needless to say, they died shortly thereafter. When it was impossible to retrieve the humerus of the dead, a piece of arrow cane was cut to simulate the bone.

The iboiwatitit member who had brought the arm bone of the dead back to the village would place it in a basket in his wife's dwelling and keep it there for about a month. People from other villages were invited to attend the [598] burial, and on this occasion other members of the deceased's iboiwatitit engaged in ritual dispute for the honor of burying the bone. The humerus was always retained by the man who had secured it, and it was buried in the floor of his house.

727 554 784 Thus far we have discussed the roles of war leaders, the Muchacha society, the shaman, and the iboiwatitit of the fallen warrior, but other social statuses connected with warfare became activated after the return of the expedition. A wounded warrior was treated as if dead for one year after the hostilities; he had no sexual relations, his hair was allowed to grow long, and the use of his name was tabooed during that period.

727 554 [609] [825] The most important status was that of a taker of a trophy head, who was referred to as *Dajeboiši*. Literally, the title means "mother of the peccary," an allusion to the Mundurucú view of other tribes as being equivalent to game animals. The "mother" part of the term is derived from the trophy head's power to attract game and to cause their numerical increase, and the head-hunter was so titled because of his obvious fertility promoting function; paradoxically for such a seemingly masculine status, he symbolically filled a female role.

727 224 The trophy head was believed to exert a powerful charm over the spirit protectors of the animal world and thus improved the supply and availability of game. Each time that the men of the village went hunting, the Dajeboiši

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727 616 766 mentary moiety have the privilege (or pleasure, as some informants phrased it) of burying the dead of the other moiety, if only symbolically. For this purpose, the humerus of the dead Mundurucú was cut off and the flesh stripped from the bone after the arm was boiled and allowed to dry in the sun. Indicative of the symbolic importance attached to the moieties' prerogative of burying each other's dead was the practice of amputating the humerus of a wounded but still living warrior who was unable to continue the return journey. Furthermore, when the body was lost or a vengeance party was in hot pursuit and such Draconian measures were impossible, a symbolic arm bone was made out of a short piece of arrow cane and duly mourned, treasured, and buried.

727 766 The grisly operation of taking the humerus of the fallen warrior was performed by a member of the latter's *iboiwatitit*, or those clans of the opposite moiety that held the special burial right over the deceased's clan. This man brought the bone back to his village and guarded it carefully, sleeping with it in his [illegible] "as if it were a baby." After an unspecified period, the man's mourners and many members of his *iboiwatitit* gathered to bury the bone in the floor of its custodian's house.

● 765 [302] Both male and female kinsmen of the slain warrior were expected to weep loudly upon hearing news of his death. The patterned wailing of the m[illegible] was of short duration, but that of the women was expected to last for seve[illegible]months. Also, women, as in the event of the death of any relative, had their h[illegible]ropped close to the scalp and were prohibited from wearing any body ornamen[illegible]on. The latter restriction applied also to men, but their hair was not cut. The cutting of the woman's hair was always done by a male member of her *iboiwatitit*.

727 796 The actual cycle of trophy-head ceremonies began shortly after the return of the war party with an observance known as *Inyenborotaptam*, or Decorating the Ears. This ceremony and those celebrated in the two succeeding rainy seasons were held under the leadership of the taker (or takers) of the trophy head, who was thereafter honored by the title of *Dajeboiši*, or Mother of the Peccary. Food was amassed by the host village under his direction, and invitations were issued to other villages. The purpose of this phase of the trophy-head ceremony was to decorate the head. Implicitly, its function was to inaugurate the head and its owner into the status that both would occupy until the conclusion of the cycle.

The preparation of the trophy head began during the return march from the enemy village. First the brains were extracted with the wide bamboo point of a war arrow, which was inserted into the head through the foramen magnum. The teeth were then knocked out and carefully stored away, and the head was lightly boiled and dried near the fire. This process made the skin dry and parchment-like and effectively preserved it. Finally a woven cord was inserted in the mouth and led out through the nostril by a hole pierced in the hard palate, leaving the tasseled ends of the cord dangling from the mouth and nostril. At a later time, the eye sockets were sealed with beeswax and two paca teeth affixed across either eye.

The Mundurucú considered the crowning glory of a trophy head to be the